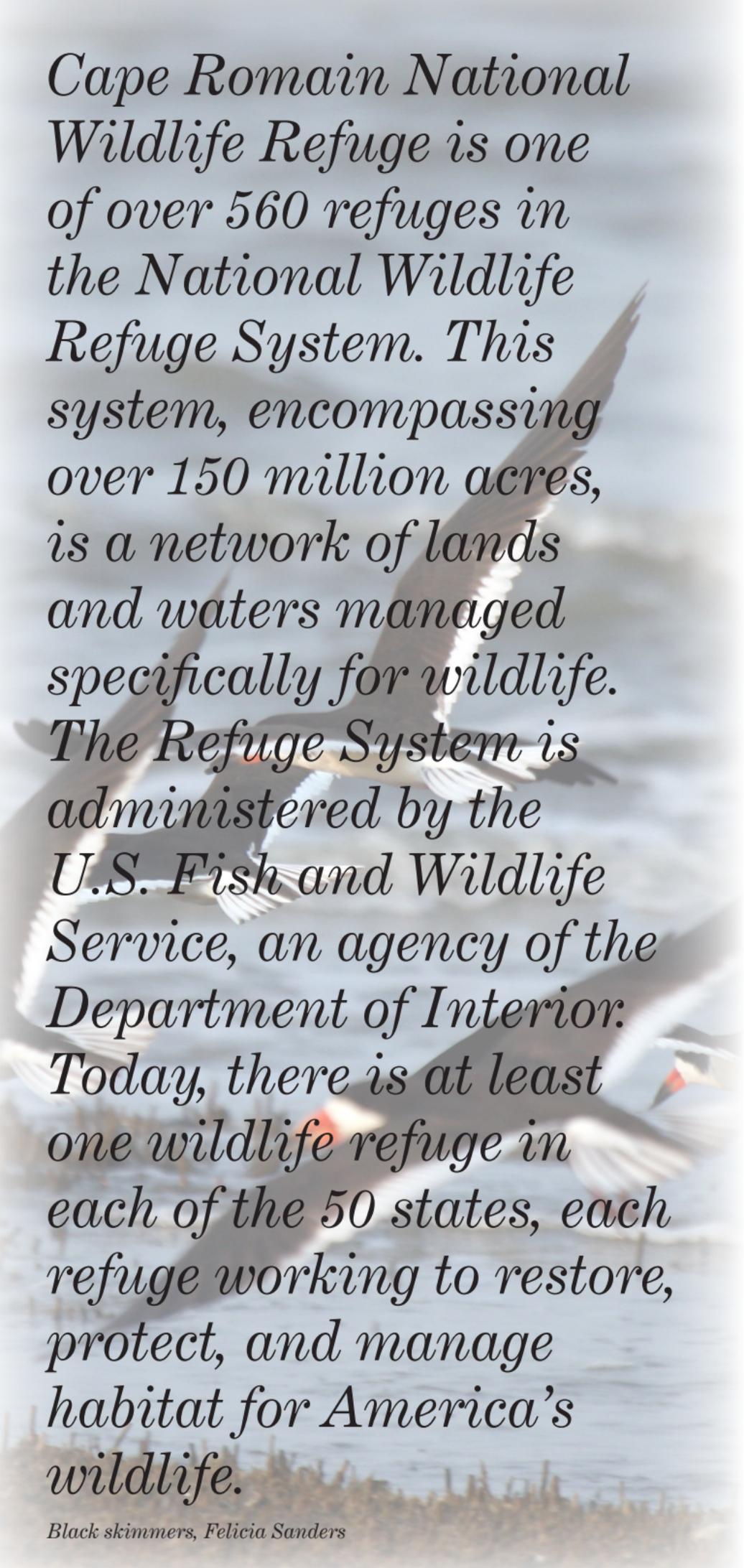


U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Cape Romain

National Wildlife Refuge



A black skimmer bird is shown in flight, its wings spread wide, flying over a body of water. The bird's distinctive long, flat bill is visible, and its wings show a mix of dark and light feathers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus view of the water and a distant shoreline with some vegetation.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. This system, encompassing over 150 million acres, is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for wildlife. The Refuge System is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of Interior. Today, there is at least one wildlife refuge in each of the 50 states, each refuge working to restore, protect, and manage habitat for America's wildlife.



This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Preserving a Rich Natural and Cultural Heritage

In 1932, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established to provide a safe haven for migratory birds. Stretching for 22 miles along the coast of South Carolina, the refuge is an area rich in natural resources. Its pristine lands and waters (66,306 acres) include barrier islands with long sandy beaches, dense maritime forest, fresh and brackish water impoundments, emergent salt marshes and intricate coastal waterways. In the estuarine wetlands, the incoming tide carries juvenile fish, crustaceans and other invertebrates, combining the nourishment of the ocean with the nutrient-laden fresh waters of several small rivers to make one of the most productive environments on earth. Numerous plants and animals at Cape Romain are all dependent upon the delicate balance of the estuary.



*Bulls Island beach,
Ricky Wrenn*

Historic cultural resources remind us of the significant connection between this coastal land and its earlier human inhabitants. "Middens", which are ancient shell heaps deposited by Native Americans over two thousand years ago, can be found on Bulls Island. The remaining foundation of the "Old Fort", a structure that served the coastal people through pillaging pirates and the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, can be viewed. Two 1800's lighthouses stand as maritime sentinels on Lighthouse Island and serve as historic landmarks and navigational aids for the coastline.



*Cape Romain lighthouse,
Steve Hillebrand*

A Wildlife Haven

A myriad of wildlife is found within Cape Romain's fascinating and diverse habitats. Established as a migratory bird refuge, Cape Romain NWR is known for its abundant and varied bird life. The refuge provides abundant foraging, nesting and resting areas, for over 293 species of birds that include seabirds, shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, raptors, and neotropical and resident songbirds. The refuge claims one of four large nesting rookeries for brown pelicans, terns, and gulls on the South Carolina coast and harbors the largest wintering population of American oystercatchers along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

Noted as one of 500 Important Bird Areas by the National Audubon Society, the refuge provides critical habitat for federally listed species such as the threatened Piping plover, threatened Wood stork, and Wilson's plover and American oystercatcher, both listed as high priority species of concern. Cape Romain is designated within the Cape Romain-Santee Delta Region, a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, one of only four sites on the Atlantic coast of the United States and Canada.



*Royal terns, Felicia
Sanders*

Over 24 types of reptiles, 12 varieties of amphibians and over 36 species of mammals have been recorded on the refuge. On Bulls Island, American alligators are plentiful. Black Eastern fox squirrels, bob cats and White-tailed deer find refuge in the maritime forest. Refuge barrier islands are crucial to the protection of the northern sub-population of the threatened Loggerhead sea turtle, which nests from Virginia to Florida. Refuge beaches support the largest nesting population of Loggerhead turtles north of Amelia Island, Florida, averaging 1000 nests annually.



American oystercatcher, Samantha Collins



Loggerhead sea turtle hatchling, Laura Smith



Loggerhead nest recovery, Steve Hillebrand



Managing for Wildlife

The refuge's original objectives were to conserve habitat for waterfowl, seabirds, shorebirds, and resident species. Objectives have expanded to include: managing endangered and threatened species, protecting the 29,000 acre Class 1 Wilderness Area, and preserving the Bulls Island and Cape Island forests. Wildlife managers and biologists use the following techniques to support wildlife's battle for survival.

Protection of threatened Loggerhead sea turtle nests: Activities include locating nests and false crawls, nest relocation, caging, monitoring, and predator control. When necessary, nests are relocated to protect the eggs from predatory raccoons and eroding beaches.

Protection of nesting seabirds and shorebirds: The Refuge has implemented a strategy of temporary closures at bird nesting areas.

Preservation of maritime forest habitat: An aggressive control plan using a variety of application methods is used to control the Chinese tallow tree on Bulls island and other invasive plants such as phragmites and bamboo.

Management of impoundment water levels: The impoundments on Bulls Island are managed to maximize food production for waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds, and maintain habitat for resident birds through the use of water control structures. The structures operate with tidal surges to control the water flow between the impoundments and tidal creeks.

Volunteer Gina McQuilken, Billy Shaw

Yours to Enjoy

Visit Cape Romain and experience pristine sandy beaches, salt marsh vistas, and a sub-tropical maritime forest of Live oak, Cabbage palmetto and Loblolly pine.

Wildlife Observation

Birdwatching opportunities are available throughout the year. Look for herons and egrets, hawks, the Bald eagle, threatened Wood stork, and American oystercatcher year-round.

In the spring and summer, neotropical migrants such as the Painted bunting, Hooded warbler and Summer tanager return to nest in the forest. Many shorebirds and seabirds, including the Willet, American oystercatcher, Black skimmer, Wilson's plover and various species of terns and gulls, use the refuge beaches for nesting.

During the fall, Peregrine falcons and Merlins move through and ducks arrive in preparation for their winter stay. Birders can observe Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue-winged teal, Bufflehead, and other waterfowl species in the winter.

The refuge provides two wildlife viewing platforms: the Dave Clough platform, located off of the Turkey Walk Trail, overlooks Upper Summerhouse Pond; Jacks Creek tower overlooks Jacks Pond and is located off of Sheepshead Ridge Road.

In the more forested areas on Bulls Island, you might see the Eastern fox squirrel or a White-tailed deer. Alligators are seen in the managed wetlands but are more prevalent in the ponds along "Alligator Alley" and along the banks of Jacks Creek. In the brackish creeks and bays of the refuge, look for the small Diamondback terrapin, so named due to the pattern on its shell.

Photography

Opportunities for nature photography are excellent at Cape Romain.



Wood stork, Steve Hillebrand



Birdwatching, Steve Hillebrand



American alligator, Nelle Rutecki



Shorebird survey, Ricky Wrenn

Perhaps the most photographed location is Boneyard Beach at Bulls Island. Here, hundreds of oaks, cedars and pines are strewn along a three mile stretch of beach.

Hiking Trails

There are two hiking trails located on Bulls Island. The forested one-mile Middens Trail takes one past the remains of ancient Native American shell mounds. The two-mile



Surf fishing, Kristin Gardner

Turkey Walk Trail meanders along salt marsh, over dikes and through dense maritime forest to the beach. There are also 16 miles of unpaved roads that are open for hiking and biking.

Shelling

Cape Romain's beaches offer excellent shelling for sand dollar, whelk, olive, angel wing and many other shells. You may collect one

small bag of unoccupied shells.



Archer at Bulls Island hunt, Tricia Midgett

Fishing

Fish the bays and creeks on the refuge, surf-fish off of the beaches and fish and crab on the Garris Landing pier. Catch Spottail bass, Sea trout, Flounder, Sheepshead and Black drum year-round. Catch shrimp and crabs, and harvest oysters and clams when in season. All fishing activities are allowed in accordance with State regulations.

Hunting

Two annual six-day archery hunts for White-tailed deer are offered at Bulls Island as a means to manage a healthy population. Rail hunting is also allowed. The Cape Romain Hunt Brochure provides information on refuge hunts. Regulations for rail hunting are provided in a separate State Migratory Bird Brochure.



*Insect discovery,
Michelle Wrenn*

Visit the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center

The Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center showcases the valuable ecosystems of the Refuge and Francis Marion National Forest.

In the spring, the Bluebirds take up residence in their nesting boxes along the Bluebird trail. The Nebo Trail is a one-mile loop that traverses through bottomland and upland forested areas, past the picnic pavilion, the Sewee Pond, and to the Nebo fishing ponds.

The Nebo Trail boardwalk leads to the



Red wolf, Stephen Drake

live Red wolf exhibit where you can observe this rare and beautiful animal. The Red wolf, one of the most endangered animals in the world, was historically found in the southeastern United States. Cape Romain plays an integral role in the Red wolf captive breeding program.

Bulls Island was the experimental release site in the late 1970's to determine the feasibility of releasing the wolves back into their historic range.

The Center is located one-quarter mile north of the refuge office. Hours are Wednesday – Saturday, 9 am–5 pm. Visit www.fws.gov/refuge/sewee_center.



*Volunteer Dennis Hyatt,
Tricia Midgett*

Volunteer Opportunities

Would you like to help our conservation efforts? Become a volunteer! Volunteers engage in a variety of tasks including: Loggerhead sea turtle nest relocation, interpretation and education, maintenance, and visitor information services. Visit www.fws.gov/refuge/cape_roman or contact the refuge at 843/928 3264.



Boneyard Beach, Huang Donghue

Refuge Regulations

General regulations are listed below. For a complete list, visit http://www.fws.gov/refuge/cape_romain.

Hours of Operation

The refuge is open daily during daylight hours only, from sunrise to sunset. Entering any area with posted "closed" signs is prohibited.

Camping

Camping is prohibited. Camping facilities are located nearby on the Francis Marion National Forest.

Fires

Fires are prohibited throughout the refuge due to potential fire hazards.

Hunting

Hunting is permitted on approximately 16,500 acres of the refuge. Hunters are required to familiarize themselves with Federal and State regulations.

Firearms

Effective February 2010, persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of state and local law.

Shells

Shell collectors are allowed to take one small bag of unoccupied shells. Collection of shells for commercial purposes is prohibited.

Pets

Pets are not allowed on refuge islands or on the pier at Garriss Landing.

Bicycles

Bicycles are only allowed on the service roads on Bulls Island. Riding bicycles on the beach or on designated hiking trails is prohibited.

Refuge Office

The refuge office is located approximately 21 miles north of Charleston on Highway 17. The office is open Monday - Friday (except holidays), from 8 am - 4 pm.



Shelling, Steve Hillebrand



Volunteer Jim Hawkins, USFWS

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge
5801 Highway 17 North
Awendaw, SC 29429
Phone: 843/928 3264
Fax: 843/928 3803



Email: caperomain@fws.gov
Website: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/cape_romain
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/sewee_center

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

August 2019



Brown pelicans, Felicia Sanders

